

OUTCOME
GOAL 3.4 –
REDUCE
EXPLOITATION
OF CHILD
LABOR AND
ADDRESS CORE
INTERNATIONAL
LABOR
STANDARDS
ISSUES

Overview

Awareness of the severity of the worldwide child labor problem has increased dramatically in recent years. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), as many as 250 million children under the age of 15 around the world are employed full – or part-time. The United States views exploitative child labor as a human rights abuse and an impediment to economic development. Recently, the U.S. increased its contribution to the ILO’s International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) tenfold, to \$30 million, making it the largest contributor to the IPEC program. To increase efforts to eradicate exploitative child labor worldwide, the U.S. has an active outreach program to American businesses, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and trade unions.

Serving the Public

DOL’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) is responsible for developing policy and programs relating to international labor activities, and coordinating Departmental international activities involving other U.S. government agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs. ILAB’s international labor programs focus on developing core labor standards, working with other nations to implement these standards, and operating technical assistance programs that help countries in transition, particularly newly emerging democracies, develop stable labor systems.

ILAB has been instrumental in funding IPEC-country and regional projects to promote the progressive elimination of child labor by raising awareness to the plight of working children; documenting the extent and nature of child labor; and removing children from exploitative work situations. ILAB also works to provide these children with educational alternatives and their families with income generating opportunities.

DOL Challenges for the Future

Child labor is frequently caused by poverty, and long-term solutions can only be achieved through sustained economic growth. Reducing poverty and providing access to free education, while at the same time addressing the needs of families, offers a significant challenge.

The 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work commits 174 member countries to respect four principles embodied by seven ILO "core" conventions: freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced labor; elimination of exploitative child labor; and non-discrimination in employment. The Declaration recognizes that all ILO member states, whether or not they have ratified the conventions, have an obligation to respect these fundamental workers’ rights. A critical challenge will be the Department’s ability to influence governments to comply with the Declaration and to take corrective action once violations have been identified.

REDUCE CHILD LABOR IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Goal 3.4A: Increase by 33 percent the number of countries signing a Memo of Understanding (MOU) with the International Labor Organization's (ILO) International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC).

Countries in IPEC	
Baseline:	29 Countries (FY 1998)
Target:	39 Countries
Actual:	35 Countries (as of 9/30/99)

Results: The Department did not meet its target of increasing IPEC membership to 39 countries. As of September 30, 1999, 35 countries had signed MOUs with ILO-IPEC.

Program Description: The ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) was created in 1992 to implement technical cooperation activities in countries with significant numbers of child laborers. The program is funded through voluntary contributions of ILO member nations.

DOL, through its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), encourages countries to become IPEC members by providing funding and public support for these programs. IPEC encourages member participation through research, design, and implementation of a common plan of action to address child labor problems within a particular country.

Analysis of Results: In FY 1998, there were 29 IPEC member countries. Of the six additional countries that joined IPEC during FY 1999, only Uganda was funded by the

Department. IPEC membership for the remaining five countries was supported by other IPEC donors.

Throughout FY 1999, the Department committed substantial resources to increasing country participation in the IPEC program. In addition to funding the membership of Uganda, DOL funded six additional country programs: Ghana, Haiti, Mongolia, Nigeria, Romania, and Zambia. In October 1999, Mongolia officially became an IPEC member. It is expected that the remaining five countries will soon sign MOUs and become IPEC members, increasing IPEC membership to a total of 41 countries.

Strategies: The Department's FY 1999 budget contained \$30 million to continue work on international child labor issues, including funding for IPEC. The funding has allowed DOL to:

- Enlist the participation of more countries in IPEC's technical assistance programs;
- Develop statistical surveys and baseline information to assess future progress in reducing child labor;
- Support programs that encourage innovative partnerships between governments, industry, workers, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that address the problems of child labor; and
- Remove children from work and provide them with educational opportunities and their parents with viable economic alternatives.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: The Department determines the success of this goal based on the



Children engaged in hazardous agricultural undertakings in the Dominican Republic.

**Photo by: Benjamin Smith
USDOL/ILAB.**

number of countries signing MOUs with IPEC, since this number indicates support among countries for taking action to address child labor. DOL anticipates additional countries seeking IPEC membership in the near future. In FY 2000, however, this goal will be revised to better reflect anticipated outcomes and results and to help assess the extent to which public awareness about the plight of working children rises and international support to combat child labor increases. ■

IMPLEMENT EFFORTS TO REMOVE CHILDREN FROM EXPLOITATIVE AND HAZARDOUS WORK

Goal 3.4B: Increase by 100 percent the number of International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) child labor elimination projects funded by the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB).

Country and Regional IPEC Programs Funded by ILAB	
Baseline:	7 Country projects
Target:	14 Country projects
Actual:	14 Country projects
Baseline:	2 Regional projects
Target:	4 Regional projects
Actual:	4 Regional projects

Results: The Department met its FY 1999 goal of doubling the number of ILAB-funded IPEC child labor elimination projects by funding 14 IPEC country projects and four IPEC regional projects during the fiscal year.

Analysis of Results: New country programs were established in Ghana, Haiti, Mongolia, Romania, Uganda, and Zambia. Additional FY 1999 country programs include a project focusing on child domestic servants in Haiti; a project in Guatemala focusing on the fireworks industry; and national child labor surveys—based on IPEC’s Statistical Information and Monitoring Program (SIMPOC) program—in Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria, Romania, Uganda, and Zambia.

Regional projects include a project focusing on the trafficking of children for exploitative work in West and Central Africa; a project targeting children employed in the fishing

industry in Southeast Asia; a project addressing children working in the informal footwear sector in Southeast Asia; and a regional SIMPOC program in Central America and the Caribbean covering eight additional countries.

In addition to the country and regional programs, DOL committed resources to removing children from hazardous work in the fireworks industry of El Salvador; the garbage dumps of Nicaragua; commercial plantations in Central America; small mines of South America; and trafficking for exploitative work in South Asia.

Strategies: The FY 1999 program focused on funding country and regional projects that removed children from exploitative and hazardous work and provided educational alternatives for children and income generating opportunities for their families. In addition, DOL funded national child labor surveys to develop baseline data on the incidence of child labor.

Successful strategies supporting these IPEC projects involve innovative partnerships among governments, NGOs, and workers’ and employers’ organizations. These groups play key roles in carrying out direct action projects that target children in hazardous industries, and will continue to be important as a global awareness campaign to increase understanding about international child labor issues and promote basic education for working children is being developed for the next year.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: The Department has revised its FY 2000 goal to better reflect outcomes and anticipated results and to more

accurately assess the extent to which projects prevent children from participating in exploitative and hazardous work. Since the

development of baseline data is vital to goal assessment and planning, DOL is intending to fund the development of child labor baseline information through the SIMPOC program.

Audits and Evaluations: ILAB has supported efforts to more accurately document the extent and nature of child labor through SIMPOC. The program collects, analyzes and disseminates information, while building local capacity to carry out child labor surveys. While SIMPOC measures the extent and nature of child labor at the national level, individual country and sector-specific projects collect baseline information and have built-in evaluation components to measure progress in reducing the incidence of child labor. ■



Child making firecrackers in a fireworks workshop in Guatemala.

Photo by: Marcia Eugenio
USDOL/ILAB

PROMOTE LABOR STANDARDS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Goal 3.4C: Increase implementation of core labor standards in five countries.

Countries where ILAB has assisted increased implementation of core labor standards	
Target:	Implement programs in 5 countries
Actual:	<p><u>4 countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cambodia - Haiti - Mexico - South Africa <p><u>Plus:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labor unanimously adopted by the 174 ILO member countries

Results: The Department successfully met this goal. Core labor standards were implemented in four countries – Cambodia, Haiti, Mexico, and South Africa. Moreover, the adoption of the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and its ratification by all 174 International Labor Organization (ILO) member countries will help reduce child labor in developing countries.

Analysis of Results: The adoption by the ILO in June, 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work, was a major political and moral affirmation of the importance of core labor standards to the global economy. The Declaration introduced a new mechanism to hold member states accountable for providing basic labor rights. While many countries have made a commitment to improve the implementation of core labor standards, many lack the organizational and technical capabilities necessary to address the

problem. To assure implementation, the Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) is working with the ILO and other agencies to enhance the capacities of Labor Ministries to address standards issues; to build partnerships between governments, businesses, and workers; to effectively adopt standards in the workplace; and to provide information to all parties on standards.

In *Cambodia*, ILAB initiated a program with the ILO to monitor and report on working conditions in the garment industry. DOL obtained funding commitments of \$1.6 million to date - including \$600,000 from the Government of Cambodia and the Cambodian Manufacturers Association - to initiate a program to assess the degree to which working conditions comply with Cambodian labor law, consistent with Cambodia's international obligations. The project will also educate employers and workers about their responsibilities under the labor code and help strengthen the inspection services of the Cambodian Ministry of Labor.

In *Haiti*, ILAB, in concert with the ILO and the Haitian Association of Garment Manufacturers, local unions, and the Ministry of Labor, has developed a program to improve working conditions in the garment sector. On September 30, 1999, the Department awarded a \$1 million grant to the ILO to implement the project over a two year period. The ILO is in the process of recruiting for a chief technical advisor to direct the project, with the expectation that project activities will commence in early 2000.

In *Mexico*, ILAB's National Administrative Office's (NAO) labor

law enforcement review process and public cooperative activities, is working to address allegations that freedom of association and collective bargaining rights are not sufficiently respected, and that many workers are being subjected to employment discrimination and inadequate occupational safety and health conditions. NAO reviewed and publicly reported on pregnancy-based employment discrimination in Mexico's maquiladora sector and the Secretary of Labor consulted with her Mexican counterpart on the matter. These consultations led to a recognition of the illegality of such activity and a commitment to increased public education and enforcement efforts. Mexico and the United States conducted public outreach sessions to educate workers and employers about the rights of women in the work place. Reviews also focused on the certification of independent trade unions, the process for gaining bargaining rights, and safety and health conditions.

In *South Africa*, the Department's International Labor Affairs Bureau and Employment Standards Administration are working to build the institutions necessary for eliminating discrimination in the workplace. For the past two years, DOL has provided technical advice to the South African Department of Labor (SADOL) team responsible for drafting the country's recently-passed Equity Law. The Department is currently training South Africa's Equity Office to implement the law's affirmative action and anti-discrimination measures by teaching SADOL staff how to train national, provincial and local staff how to implement operations. DOL has helped SADOL design and develop an operations manual (including

recommendations on Information Technology support systems). DOL also assisted in the development of a training plan, draft materials, and a training curriculum outline for SADOL workgroup review.

On June 17, 1999, the 174 member countries of the ILO unanimously adopted the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182). The Department played a major role in drafting the convention. On November 5, 1999, the U.S. Senate gave its consent for ratification, and on December 2, 1999, President Clinton formally signed the Convention, calling it "a victory for the children of the world." Unanimous adoption of Convention 182 by the ILO represents an important step forward in eliminating exploitative child labor. The new Convention encourages action by countries around the world to address child labor and conform to international labor standards.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans:

The Department will revise its goal in FY 2000 to better reflect outcomes and anticipated results. The FY 2000 goal will more accurately assess the application and implementation of core labor standards and the improvement of social safety net programs in developing countries. A multilateral and bilateral technical cooperation program is being launched in FY 2000 to strengthen labor standards and improve social safety nets. ■

ADVANCE CORE LABOR STANDARDS IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION INITIATIVES

Goal 3.4D: Advance frameworks for core labor standards in One Regional Economic Integration Initiative.

Regional Economic Integration	
Target:	One Regional Economic Integration Initiative
Actual:	Child Labor framework advanced in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
Preliminary Data as of 9/30/99	

Results: The Department uses two indicators to measure goal performance: 1) number of regional economic integration initiatives that adopt a framework of core labor standards proposed by the U.S.; and 2) number of regional economic integration initiatives that make progress in enhancing implementation of core labor standards.

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Human Resources Development Conference Ministers accepted a DOL proposal to conduct a project on child labor. This acceptance represents the first time that the 21 economies of APEC have agreed to cooperate on one of the core labor standards.

Analysis of Results: At the Third APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Conference held in Washington, D.C., in July 1999, the Department successfully secured passage of a new commitment by APEC to address the issue of child labor. In addition, DOL secured passage of key provisions laying the foundation for APEC to more closely link human resources and core labor standards issues to

APEC's central objective of promoting economic growth and trade liberalization.

The ground-breaking APEC initiative on child labor – a high Administration priority – represents a significant change in APEC's approach to core labor standards issues. The Joint Ministerial Statement, agreed upon by a consensus of all 21 APEC economies, committed that APEC members would explore "ways of eliminating the worst forms of child labor." The agreement directed APEC's Human Resources Development working Group "to give priority to this issue and to implement an activity in support of this work." The Ministers directed the Working Group to develop a project to exchange information on best practices for eliminating the worst forms of child labor and to promote youth educational opportunities. Finally, the U.S. successfully gained passage of several provisions that call for greater participation in APEC activities by all sectors of society.

Strategies: Following U.S. suggestions, Ministers agreed that "Governments cannot achieve social agendas alone. They need the cooperation of other social partners, such as businesses, workers, community groups, and other organizations." The Plan of Action adopted by the Ministers called for APEC members to identify effective strategies of cooperation. These initiatives marked the first time that APEC has addressed the broad issue of participation.

Goal Assessment and Future Plans: This goal will be replaced in FY 2000 by goals addressing the advancement of core labor standards and social safety nets through multilateral and bilateral technical assistance. ■